



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, SACRAMENTO
CORPS OF ENGINEERS
1325 J STREET
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814-2922

Environmental Resource Branch

DEC - 5 2007

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:


Enclosed for your review and comment is the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Planned Deviation from the Water Control Plan, Isabella Dam and Lake, Kern County, California, November 2007. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) proposes this emergency deviation in order to lower the lake level to a safe and acceptable elevation/capacity based on recent results of the Corps' seismic investigations of Isabella Dam. This EA discusses the effects of the proposed deviation on environmental resources in the area.

Based on the seismic investigations, the Corps has concluded that Isabella Dam could fail during a low intensity earthquake or maximum credible earthquake, thus releasing uncontrollable amounts of water and flooding communities downstream of the dam. During the proposed emergency deviation, the Isabella Dam project would be operated to maintain the reservoir elevation at or below 2,585.5 feet (storage at or below approximately 356,700 acre-feet) from March 20, 2007, to September 30, 2013, annually, and possibly for several additional years until dam remediation is completed. Water releases would be made so that they can be safely passed downstream and used by the local interests without exceeding the channel capacities of the downstream area below the dam or affecting their water rights.

The Corps continues to coordinate this proposed emergency deviation with Kern County and other governmental agencies. The Corps initially met with the Kern River Watermaster, Kern River water interest groups, Kern County Office of Emergency Services, and others in Bakersfield on April 29, 2006, to discuss the deviation. Conference calls are being made on regular basis (usually 2 to 3 times a week) between the Corps and water users, water districts, State of California representatives, and others to discuss the operation of the reservoir and required releases from the dam based on this emergency deviation. Similar coordination will continue as long as required during the snowmelt runoff season.

The public comment period for this draft EA ends on December 21, 2007. Please provide any written comments to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Resources Branch (CESPK- PD-R), Attention: Mr. Mario Parker, 1325 J Street, Sacramento, California 95814. Comments can also be sent by e-mail to mario.g.parker@usace.army.mil or by fax at (916) 557-7856. If you have any questions, please call Mr. Parker at (916) 557-6701.

Sincerely,

 Francis C. Piccola
Chief, Planning Division

Enclosure